United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/862
5 April 1991

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- Security Council condemns repression of Iraqi civilian population, including most recently in Kurdish populated areas, which it says threatens international peace and security in the region.

- UNHCR and Red Cross officials say more than $100 million is needed for refugees fleeing conflict in Iraq.

- Secretary-General tells Security Council that he intends to submit shortly a formal proposal to the Council on a United Nations verification mission in El Salvador.

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The Security Council in a formal meeting late this afternoon voted to condemn the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq, including most recently in Kurdish populated areas, the consequences of which it said threatened international peace and security in the region.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 10 in favour to 3 against (Cuba, Yemen and Zimbabwe), with 2 abstenstions (China and India).

By the resolution, sponsored by Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Council expressed grave concern about the massive flow of refugees towards and across international frontiers.

It demanded that Iraq contribute to removing the threat to regional peace and security by immediately ending the repression. It expressed hope that an open dialogue would take place to ensure that the human and political rights of all Iraqi citizens were respected.

The Council further called on Iraq to allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance in all parts of the country. It requested the Secretary-General to pursue his humanitarian efforts in Iraq and to report forthwith, if appropriate on the basis of a further mission to the region. It requested further that the Secretary-General use all the resources at his disposal, including those of

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the relevant United Nations agencies, to address urgently the critical needs of the refugees and displaced Iraqi population.

In related news, Iran has informed the United Nations that so far more than 110,000 Iraqi civilians have crossed the border between the two countries, including more than 45,000 in the north. In a letter to the Secretary-General yesterday, Iranian Ambassador Kamal Kharrazi said about 500,000 Iraqis were expected to arrive within the next few days. He said hundreds of thousands of citizens were crossing by car into Iran on the only paved road, while thousands of others were trying to escape on foot through the mountains, under what he described as "heart-breaking conditions".

The Iranian Ambassador said the border remained open but that the influx of refugees was causing tension and chaos along the borders. He said the "magnitude of the suffering of the Iraqi refugees, its international character and its consequences for regional peace and security" made a concerted international reaction by the Security Council "a political and humanitarian imperative".

In other communications, Iraqi Ambassador Abdul Amir Al-Anbari said in a letter to the Secretary-General yesterday that Iraq had invited all citizens fleeing the country to return home under conditions of "full security and dignity". He said Iraq was prepared to cooperate with any third party in this connection.

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United Nations officials estimate that more than $100 million is needed to provide supplementary facilities for refugees fleeing the conflict in Iraq.

Reporting from Geneva, a United Nations press officer said today that officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told journalists that contingency plans were being made to help 400,000 people in Iran and Turkey. An estimated 70,000 refugees were now being helped in Iran, the officials said, and it was anticipated that arrivals there could reach 10,000 a day. They said the Turkish Government had given assurances that it would open the border with Iraq to admit the thousands of people massing there.

In a related development, the Red Cross has noted with deep concern the worsening plight of civilians throughout Iraq, where it said the health and sanitation situation have reached catastrophic proportions. Epidemics were breaking out because of the lack of clean drinking water and children were dying within hours from diarrhoea, the Committee said.

In other news, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has donated $250,000 from its Emergency Reserve Fund to provide help for women and children fleeing from Iraq into Turkey. The UNICEF said the number of refugees was expected to escalate dramatically as a result of an intensification of hostilities and improvement in weather conditions.

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In a separate development, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar told the Security Council yesterday that he intends to submit shortly a formal proposal to the Council on a United Nations verification mission in El Salvador.

The establishment of such a mission, he said, would be the initial component of a United Nations operation to overlook the cease-fire between the Government and the Frente Farabundo Marti para Liberacion Nacional (FMLN).

The Secretary-General said he would be reporting to the Council about progress in the forthcoming negotiations between the parties in El Salvador.

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